

Curry might turn to courts to move Miller from district

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Prince George's County Executive Wayne K. Curry (D) escalated his war of words with his county's most powerful state legislator last week.

Curry said he is prepared to go to court to ensure that Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. no longer represents Prince George's County after next year's legislative redistricting.

Miller (D) of Chesapeake Beach moved to Calvert County last year, even though about two-thirds of his constituents are in Prince George's.

He also represents a sliver of Anne Arundel County and under a plan supported by incumbent Democrats in the Southern Maryland Annapolis delegation, he could take a piece of Charles County — representing about 8,000 to 10,000 people — when the redistricting process is over.

"He ought not to confound everybody's redistricting scenario so he can hold up four counties like a potentate," Curry said.

Under the Southern Maryland redistricting plan, District 27, currently represented by Miller, would dip into Charles County, sweep up into lower Prince George's County to include Clinton and Brandywine and then move into a small portion of Anne Arundel and the northern portions of Calvert County.

The plan would include Del. James Proctor (D-Prince George's) and Del. Joseph Vallario (D-Prince George's), both of whom would likely be included in the newly drawn District 27 that would include Charles, Prince George's and Calvert counties.

House Majority Whip Del. George W. Owings (D-Anne Arundel, Calvert) is currently a part of District 27, but after redistricting, his district is likely to be drawn solely within Calvert County. District 29, represented by Del. Anthony O'Donnell (R), is likely to include only the southern tip of Calvert and more of St. Mary's County after redistricting.

Miller on Thursday dismissed Curry's remarks as "political rhetoric."

Curry, who has feuded with Miller and the state's most powerful Prince Georgian, Gov. Parris Glendening (D), for years, said he does not expect the governor and legislature to remove Prince George's from Miller's district. But he said he could argue in court that Miller's presence in the Prince George's delegation is unfairly thwarting adequate minority representation for the county.

"The insiders rule the day [in redistricting], but there are thankfully other constitutional avenues that we can continue down," Curry said.

While Curry's beef with Miller is largely personal, it also touches on the ongoing debate over how to increase minority representation in the county and state.

Prince George's has six Senate districts fully within the county, and has two senators who also represent other jurisdictions. Of these eight senators, five are white and three are black — even though the county's population is almost 70 percent minority. Ten of the county's 21 members of the House of Delegates are black, and one is Filipino-American.

A redistricting plan being promoted by the county's Senate delegation would add one mostly-minority Senate district in Prince George's and could increase the number of minority delegates from Prince George's by as many as seven.

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Miller predicted that the plan would satisfy Curry and short-circuit any talk of a lawsuit.

"There will be nothing to go to court over, believe me," he said. "You have to have grounds."

Miller, who has been a power in Prince George's politics since his election to the legislature in 1970, repeatedly has pledged his allegiance to the county he moved out of. His law office is in Clinton, as is his family business, B.K. Miller Liquors. Two of his daughters live in his old house in Clinton.

For most of his tenure, Miller's district also has included some portion of Southern Maryland. He represented the western portion of Charles County prior to the last round of redistricting in 1990, and he has always been active in issues facing the Southern Maryland Annapolis delegation.

Miller gained a piece of Anne Arundel County following the last redistricting.

Anne Arundel County Executive Janet S. Owens (D), who has squabbled with Miller over local issues, has said she would like to see the powerful Senate president excised from her county's legislative delegation as well.